

FCC Consumer Advisory

What Your Telephone Company Knows About You (And Controlling How They Use It)

What Does Your Telephone Company Know about You?

Your local, long distance, and cellular telephone company knows what numbers you call, how often you call them, how much you pay to call them, what services you subscribe to, how you use those services, and other personal and sensitive information about your telephone usage. This information is called Customer Proprietary Network Information (CPNI). Under the law, telephone companies have a duty to protect this information.

How Can Telephone Companies Use This Information?

A telephone company must obtain customer approval to use, or to share with its affiliates or third parties, CPNI to market to the customer services and products that the customer does not already receive from that company or third party. A telephone company may use CPNI to market to the customer services and products that the customer currently receives from that company without additional approval from the customer.

How Can Telephone Companies Obtain Customer Approval to Use This Information?

There are two ways companies obtain customer approval. One is by sending the customer a notice telling him or her that the company will use (and/or share with its affiliates or third parties) his or her CPNI to market telecommunications-related products and services that the customer does not currently subscribe to - unless the customer tells the company not to do so. This is known as the "opt-out" method, because the customer's approval is assumed unless he or she "opts-out" of the company's use of the CPNI.

The other method is known as the "opt-in" method. Under this method, the company will not use, or share with its affiliates or third parties, the customer's CPNI to market to the customer non-telecommunications-related products and services that the customer does not currently subscribe to, unless the customer expressly gives the company permission to do so. In that way, the customer "opts-in" to the company's use of his or her CPNI.



How Can I Control the Way Telephone Companies Use This Information?

- Read your telephone bill and any other notices you receive from your telephone company.
- Determine if your company is using the opt-in or opt-out method.
- Decide if you want your telephone company to use, or to share with its affiliates, your CPNI to market to you services and products that you do not already receive from your telephone company.
- Make your choice clear to your telephone company.

Remember: These rules apply to all telephone companies: local, long distance and cellular. You will have to make your decision known to each company about how you want it to use your CPNI.

For more information on telephone company issues, log-on to www.fcc.gov/cgb or call us at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) (voice) and 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) (TTY).

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